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Teaching Japanese in an American High School: How Japanese Teachers Make Sense Of their American Students' Communication Styles.

Thesis submitted to
The Graduate College of
Marshall University

In partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Education Specialist
Curriculum and Instruction
by

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Dr. Edwina Pendarvis, Committee Chairperson
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Marshall University

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ABSTRACT

Teaching Japanese in an American High School: How Japanese Teachers Make Sense Of their American Students' Communication Styles.

By Teppei Kiyosue

This qualitative research study explores how Japanese teachers make sense of their American students' communication styles. I conducted classroom observations in two Japanese classes by two different teachers and interviewed four Japanese teachers at high schools in Cabell County, West Virginia. The results indicate that the American students don't communicate with others under the pressure of *enryo* (response to group pressure for conformity) in their Japanese classes. Furthermore, the Japanese teachers usually approve of their American students' active communication styles without *enryo*. The results also show that the native Japanese teachers use high-context communication styles frequently in their Japanese classes and unrealistically expect their students to use *sasshi* (ability to understand indirect message) to understand their indirect communication styles. Based on this study, I offer suggestions for novice Japanese teachers so they can better adapt their teaching to American high school students.

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CHAPTER I

Introduction

What Novice Japanese Teachers Need

"What's different?" I asked. "Everything!" was the response that I got from all four novice Japanese teachers (NJTs) teaching at high schools in Huntington, WV. My question was, "What do you think are the differences in communication styles between American students and Japanese students?" They answered in both positive and negative ways. As a Japanese teacher, I am sure that the American students' communication styles with their teachers are likely to be quite different from those of their Japanese peers. "And why and how different?" I asked them and myself. None of us could explain them well. That shocked us because we all have been teaching Japanese and studying about it. They were our main purposes of coming to the United States and we continue to seek careers as Japanese teachers. We all felt we needed to study the differences.

I have heard from the four NJTs that they often become very happy about their American students' communication styles, but they also often become nervous or upset about them. Having been a Japanese teacher in the United States for more than four years, I can understand their positive feelings toward their students. My American students' communication styles often impress me in many ways, too. At the same time, I can also sympathize with their negative feelings when I reflect on my own prior teaching experiences at an American high school where I used to teach. Although all the NJTs had been certified and well-trained at a university in Osaka, Japan, before they came to the United States, they all seem to have had a difficult

time fully understanding their American students. I believe that the Japanese teachers' reactions to their students' communication styles derived from cultural differences between the United States and Japan. It seems necessary for us to study how we make sense of the differences.

Central Question

In this study, I seek to understand the perspectives of four Japanese teachers as they teach in their U.S. high school classrooms. The main purpose of this study is to deeply understand how they make sense of their American students' communication styles. In order to understand more fully, I have studied the literature about key communication styles of both Japanese and American people. I also have collected and analyzed data of classroom observations and interviews about when, why, and how the NJTs have positive or negative feelings toward their American students' communication styles.

Why Is This Study Needed?

The study is necessary to make suggestions for the NJTs to understand their negative feelings and deal with them, so that they will be more comfortable working with their American students. There are at least two reasons, I believe, why NJTs feel negative about their students' communication styles. The first is a lack of information about how their students' communication styles are culturally different from those of their Japanese peers. The second is a lack of information about what their colleagues who have already started teaching have learned from the differences.

Intended Audience

There are two Japanese programs in Huntington, WV. Each program has two Japanese teachers. They basically work for the schools as Graduate Teaching Assistants from Marshall University for two years. They teach Japanese and study as graduate students. Two new Japanese teachers usually come to Huntington to take over the positions of two of the four Japanese teachers who graduate in spring of each year.

In my research paper, I would like to give all the four NJTs who are currently teaching and who are coming to teach sufficient information for at least the two points I mentioned above. Without the information, it is impossible for them to fully understand their students because they usually have not undergone American secondary education themselves, and their teacher training programs in Japan usually cannot give them authentic information about their students in a context of the actual classroom situation in the United States.

What Will I Produce?

It is crucial that all NJTs are able to make sense of their American students' communication styles and know how to control their own stress when needed. This knowledge will help them prepare well for their classes and improve the quality of their teaching. It will also help them have their students understand the differences between American students and Japanese students without threatening the students' sense of cultural identity.

Overview

Drawing on participant observation and interview data collected over a four month period, this study explores American high school students' key

communication styles in their Japanese language classrooms and their teachers' positive and negative reactions to them.

The main goal of this study is to deeply understand how Japanese teachers make sense of their American students' communication styles. The central question to achieve the goal is "What are the positive and negative experiences of novice Japanese teachers who are native speakers of Japanese at an American high school in relation to key communication styles of American students and Japanese students?"

CHAPTER II

Review of Literature

Fundamental Terms

I begin by discussing fundamental terms. There are two sets of terms; target vs. base and acquired vs. learned. It is important to discuss these fundamental terms in order for readers to understand my research more clearly and become familiar with my research paradigm.

Here I define the first language and the second language according to a framework for introductory Japanese language curricula in American high schools and colleges (Unger, 1993). This is necessary to explain participants' cultural and linguistic background.

Target versus Base

Target language refers to the foreign language a student is learning. In this study this will be Japanese. Base language refers to the native language

of the student. In this study, in most cases this will be English. (There are 19 students and 15 of them are native speakers of English.)

By extension, Target native means a native speaker of the target language–Japanese, and base native means a native speaker of the base language–English. Likewise, Target culture and base culture refer to the cultures of the target- and base- language communities respectively. In this study these will be Japanese and American high schools.

Acquired versus Learned

In the process of growing up, children gain competence in the spoken language of their society unconsciously, for the most part. I refer to this process as language acquisition. The acquiring child usually knows no other language if he/she is surrounded by native speakers of the language. He/she is not under any time pressure, and becomes proficient without following any formal curriculum. By contrast, the process of consciously studying a foreign language involves language learning. Language acquisition and language learning are very different. Language learners already know another language (or other languages), and they are strongly affected by their native language as they learn the new language. They aim at reaching their learning goals as rapidly as possible, and are helped by proceeding according to a structured curriculum.

I believe it is useful to extend the acquired vs. learned distinction to culture. Acquired culture refers to the system by which natives of a given society interact. Like acquired language, acquired culture is gained unconsciously, during the process of socialization. For example, acquired culture determines how members of society regard the individual and define the self, their system of logic, and their attitude toward time and space.

As a target native (native Japanese) language instructor, I learned that understanding the cultural aspects of communication styles is challenging because everyone has gained them unconsciously, during the process of socialization, as have all the four Japanese teachers in this study. Donnelly (1994) also pointed out that many foreign language programs offered only by teachers of native speakers of the target languages have difficulties in teaching the cultural aspects of communication:

> In most cases, native language speakers intuitively know when appropriateness conditions are being observed. But these conditions often elude foreign speakers, since they are not directly addressed in language classes. This is perhaps the most difficult aspect of learning a foreign language. In general, foreign language courses and texts deal only with vocabulary and grammar, and not with the interpersonal communication situation. (p. 144)

From this passage, we realize that all target native Japanese teachers should consciously study their acquired language and culture putting emphasis on their interpersonal communication styles in order to effectively teach them to their base native students. This helps them to improve their teaching because base native American students interested in becoming proficient in the Japanese language must become consciously aware of the Japanese communication styles.

At the same time, target native teachers should also understand that knowledge of the target culture must be delivered through the base culture. The classroom environment itself needs to acknowledge the values of the base culture of the students.

Key Communication Styles

In order to understand similarities and differences in communication across cultures, it is necessary to have a way of talking about how cultures differ. It does not make any sense to say that "Takeshi communicates indirectly because he is a Japanese" or that "John communicates directly because he is from the United States." This does not tell us why there are differences between the way people communicate in the United States and Japan. There must be some aspects of the cultures in Japan and the United States that are different, and these differences, in turn, explain why Japanese people tend to communicate indirectly and people from the United States tend to communicate directly. In other words, there are variables on which cultures can be different or similar that can be used to explain communication across cultures. I focus on four sets of these cultural variables that I have found useful in understanding similarities and differences of key communication styles between Japan and the United States: in-group and out-group, power distance, individualism and collectivism in relation to a Japanese concept *enryo*, and low- and high-context communication in relation to *erabi* and *awase* views,.

I decided to focus on the four sets of styles because I could make some clear connections between them and the actual data from classroom observations in a pilot study I conducted in the Fall of 2002 at Marshall University.

In-group and Out-group

Triandis (1988) argues that collectivistic cultures emphasize goals, needs, and views of the in-group over those of the individual; the social norms of the in-group rather than individual pleasure; shared in-group beliefs rather than unique individual beliefs; and a value on cooperation with in-

group members rather than maximizing individual outcomes. In individualistic cultures, "people are supposed to look after themselves and their immediate family only," whereas in collectivistic cultures, "people belong to in-groups or collectivities which are supposed to look after them in exchange for loyalty" (Hofstede and Bond, 1984, p. 419).

The boundary between an in-group and out-group is very important in Japan. It is related to the general tendency to draw a boundary between inside and outside in various situations. Lebra (1976), for example, points out that

> the Japanese are known to differentiate their behavior by whether the situation is defined as *uti* or *soto*. . . . Where the demarcation line is drawn varies widely: it may be inside versus outside an individual person, a family, a group of playmates, a school, a company, a village, or a nation. It is suggestive that the term *uti* is used colloquially to refer to one's house, family, or family member, and the shop or company where one works. (p. 112)

Who is an insider and who is an outsider, then, depends on the situation and the individuals communicating.

The number of in-groups, the extent of influence for each in-group, and the depth of the influence must be taken into consideration in the analysis of individualism and collectivism (Triandis, 1988). Because individualistic cultures have many specific in-groups, they exert less influence on individuals than in-groups do in collectivistic cultures (Triandis, 1988). There are only a few general in-groups (e.g., work group, university, family) in collectivistic cultures, so they have a large influence on behavior. Although the in-group may be the same in individualistic and collectivistic cultures, the

sphere of its influence is different. The sphere of influence in an individualistic culture is very specific (e.g., the in-group affects behavior in very specific circumstances), whereas the sphere of influence in a collectivistic culture is very general (e.g., the in-group affects behavior in many different aspects of a person's life).

In-groups have different rank orders of importance in collectivistic cultures; some, for example, put family ahead of all other in-groups (Triandis, 1988). Nakane (1970), for example, points out that

> when a Japanese "faces the outside" (confronts another person) and affixes some position to himself [or herself] socially he [or she] is inclined to give precedence to institution over kind of occupation . . . In group identification, a frame such as a "company" or "association" is of primary importance; the attribute of the individual is a secondary matter. (p. 2)

If the person is a college student or faculty member, the institution with which he or she will identify is the university. Students' identification with the university continues even after they graduate—as it does with alumnae of universities in the United States, but to a much greater degree.

Power Distance

Power distance is defined as "the extent which the less powerful members of institutions and organizations accept that power is distributed unequally" (Hofstede and Bond, 1984, p. 419). Individuals from high power distance cultures accept power as part of society: superiors consider their subordinates to be different from themselves and vice versa. People in low power distance cultures, in contrast, see superiors and subordinates as the

same kinds of people, with differences in power being due to the roles they are filling. Outside the role, superiors and subordinates are equal in low power distance cultures.

People in high power distance cultures see power as a basic fact in society and stress coercive and referent power, whereas people in low power distance cultures believe power should be used only when it is legitimate and prefer to use expert or legitimate power (Hofstede, 1980). Hofstede, (1991) also points out that

> in small power distance countries there is limited dependence of subordinates on bosses, and a preference for consultation, that is, *interdependence* between boss and subordinate. The emotional distance between them is relatively small: subordinates will quite readily approach and contradict their bosses. In large power distance countries there is considerable dependence of subordinates on bosses. Subordinates respond by either *preferring* such dependence (in the form of an autocratic or paternalistic boss), or rejecting it entirely, which in psychology is known *counterdependence*: that is dependence, but with a negative sign. (p. 27)

The power distance dimension clearly influences the relationship between superiors and subordinates in organizations.

Power distance is useful in understanding behavior in role relationships, particularly those involving different degrees of power or authority. People from high power distance cultures, for example, do not question their superiors' orders. They expect to be told what to do. People in low power distance cultures, in contrast, do not necessarily accept superiors' orders at face value; they want to know why they should follow them. When

people from the two different systems interact, misunderstanding is likely unless one or both understands the other person's system.

Low and high power distance tendencies exist in all cultures, but one tends to predominate. Nakane (1970) points out that in Japan "if we postulate a social group embracing members with various different attributes, the method of tying together the constituent members will be based on the vertical relation" (p. 24). Nakane argues that in Japan the vertical relation provides the basis for group cohesion and that "even a set of individuals sharing identical qualifications tend to create *difference* among these individuals" (p. 26). The major factors on which vertical relations are formed include age, position, experience, and knowledge (Midooka, 1990). Gender is also a characteristic on which vertical relationships are formed. It is also important to recognize that age may cut across other vertical relationships. For example, a person of higher status may use polite language to a person of lower status who is older. In contrast to Japan, the United States is considered as being arranged on horizontal relationships (Nakane, 1970).

Individualism and Collectivism

Individualism-collectivism, as defined by Hofstede (1980), is the major dimension of cultural variability used to explain cross-cultural differences in behavior. Emphasis is placed on the individual's goal in individualistic cultures, whereas group goals have precedence over individuals' goals in collectivistic cultures. Waterman (1984) indicates individualistic cultures like the United States, for example, promote self-realization:

> Chief among the virtues claimed by individualist philosophers is self-realization. Each person is viewed as having a unique set of talents and potentials. The translation of these potentials into actuality is

> considered the highest purpose to which one can devote one's life. The striving for self-realization is accompanied by a subjective sense of rightness and personal well-being (pp. 4-5)

Self-realization is often viewed as the primary goal in individualistic cultures (e.g., Maslow's, 1971, hierarchy of needs places self-actualization as the highest human need). On the other hand, collectivistic cultures require that individuals fit into the group. In collectivistic cultures individuals define themselves by referring to their relations to others. Lebra (1976), for example, points out that

> the Japanese concern with belonging relates to the tendency toward collectivism, which is expressed by an individual's identification with the collective goal of the group to which he [or she] belongs. Collectivism thus involves cooperation and solidarity, and the sentimental desire for the warm feeling of *ittaikan* ("feeling oneness") with fellow members of one's group is widely shared by Japanese. (p. 25)

A strong sense of group identity is one of the most important characteristics of the Japanese. This can be found in every level of society.

The Japanese Concept of *Enryo*

Enryo often is translated as "reserve" or "restraint." Lebra (1976) points out that *enryo* is a response to group pressure for conformity. In the presence of this pressure Japanese individuals may refrain from expressing opinions that go against the majority. Wierzbica (1991) contends that *enryo* is not limited to personal opinions. It also involves self-depreciation and restraint from expressing desires, wishes, or preferences. Further, it includes

sidestepping choices when they are offered (Smith 1983). This extends to declining to state what is convenient or even desired when asked (Mizutani and Mizutani, 1987). These are attitudes that are dominant in high power distance cultures. I will discuss this in detail in the following chapter.

Lebra (1976) clearly links *enryo* to collectivism in Japan. She points out that it

> is a product of the suppression of individuality under the pressure of group solidarity and conformity, empathetic considerations for [others'] convenience or comfort, concern to prevent our [own] embarrassment, and the wish to maintain [our] freedom by avoiding social involvement without hurting [others]. (p. 252)

Wierzbica (1991) believes that *enryo* is a conscious or semiconscious attitude and that it is expressed verbally and nonverbally to others.

High-context and Low-context

Individualism versus collectivism provides a powerful framework for understanding cultural similarities and differences of communication across countries. Whereas individualism and collectivism define broad differences between cultures, Hall's (1976) low- and high-context scheme focuses upon cultural differences in communication processes.

Hall (1976) differentiates between cultures based on the communication which predominates in the culture. A high-context culture communication or message is one in which "most of the information is either in the physical context or internalized in the person, while very little is in the coded, explicit, transmitted part of the message" (p.79). A low-context communication or message, in contrast, is one in which "the mass of

information is vested in the explicit code" (p. 70). Although no culture exists at either end of the continuum, the culture of the United States is placed toward the lower end, slightly above the German, Scandinavian, and Swiss cultures. Most Asian cultures, such as the Japanese, Chinese, and Korean, in contrast, fall toward the high-context end of the continuum.

The level of context influences all other aspects of communication:

> High-context cultures make greater distinction between insiders and outsiders than low-context cultures do. People raised in high-context systems expect more of others than do the participants in low-context systems. When talking about something that they have on their minds, a high-context individual will expect his [or her] interlocutor to know what's bothering him [or her], so that he [or she] doesn't have to be specific. The result is that he [or she] will talk around and around the point, in effect putting all the pieces in place except the crucial one. Placing it properly–this keystone–is the role of his [or her] interlocutor. (Hall, 1976 p. 98)

It appears that low- and high-context communications are the predominant forms of communication in individualistic and collectivistic cultures, respectively (Gudykunst & Ting-Toomey, 1998).

As suggested earlier, members of low-context, individualistic cultures tend to communicate in a direct fashion, whereas members of high-context, collectivistic cultures tend to communicate in an indirect fashion. Levine (1985) describes communication in the United States (an individualistic culture) as leaving "little room for the cultivation of ambiguity. The dominant [North] American temper calls for clear and direct communication. It expresses itself in such common injunctions as 'Say what you mean,' 'Don't

beat around the bush,' and 'Get to the point'" (p. 28). Similarly, Okabe (1983) points out that

> [North] Americans' tendency to use explicit words is the most noteworthy characteristic of their communication style. They prefer to employ such categorical words as "absolutely," "certainly,' and "positively." . . . The English syntax dictates that the absolute "I" be placed at the beginning of a sentence in most cases, and that the subject-predicate relation be constructed in an ordinary sentence. (p. 36)

Communicators in the United States, therefore, emphasize direct, low-context communication. In describing communication in Japan, Okabe (1983) suggests that the collectivistic

> cultural assumptions of interdependence and harmony require that Japanese speakers limit themselves to implicit and even ambiguous use of words. In order to avoid leaving an assertive impression, they like to depend . . . on qualifiers such as "maybe," "perhaps," "probably," and "somewhat." Since Japanese syntax does not require use of a subject in a sentence, the qualifier-predicate is a predominant form of sentence construction. (p. 36)

Many other writers make similar observations (e.g., Johnson and Johnson, 1975). Children in Japan are taught not to call attention to themselves or take the initiative verbally. Rather, they are taught to foster *enryo*, ritualized verbal self-depreciation used to maintain group harmony.

Japanese Concepts: *Erabi* and *Awase* Views and *Sasshi*

There are two Japanese concepts that are related closely to Hall's notion of low- and high-context messages. Mushakoji (1976) contends that an *erabi* view of the world involves constructing messages with the idea of persuading others. The *awase* view of the world, in contrast, involves a speaker's adjusting to the people listening. Mushakoji points out that

> *Awase* logic does not depend upon standardized word meanings. Expressions have multifarious nuances and are considered to be only signals which hint at reality rather than describing it precisely. Words are not taken at face value; it is necessary to infer the meaning behind them. In contrast to *erabi* culture in which the face value of words is trusted most and one is expected to act on it, in *awase* society it is possible to "hear one and understand ten." It is interesting to note that in Japan it is considered virtuous to "catch on quickly" (*sasshi ga hayai*), in other words, to adjust to someone's position before it is logically and clearly enunciated. (p. 43)

Erabi logic is related closely to low-context communication, whereas *awase* logic is related closely to high-context communication.

Let us now look at Mizutani's (1981) views, which also have much in common with Hall's in thinking that:

> The philosophy underlying the Japanese expectation towards words is definitely not "what is unsaid will not be understood." Rather there seems to be distrust, with little hope placed on language – or at least the spoken language – as evidenced in such sentiments as "It should

> be understood without putting it into words" or "It's something that can't be understood even if put into words." (p. 78)

Nishida (1977) argues that understanding what is unsaid when indirect forms of communication are used is left up to the listener's *sasshi* (guessing what someone means) ability.

To summarize, low-context communication can be characterized as being direct, univocal, and absolute, with a focus on the speaker. High-context communication, in contrast, can be characterized as indirect, ambiguous, and qualified, with a focus on the receiver. Low- and high-context communication styles exist in all cultures, but one tends to predominate.

In order to understand similarities and differences of key communication styles in Japan and the United States, I have discussed four key cultural variables such as in-group and out-group, power distance, individualism and collectivism in relation to the Japanese concept of e*nryo*, and low- and high context communication in relation to *erabi* and *awase* views.

Having clarified these cultural dimensions which deeply influence our communication styles, I am going to examine how they are manifested by American students in their Japanese classrooms and how their teachers make sense of the communication styles.

CHAPTER III

Methods

Overview

The motivation for this study came from reviewing texts about Japanese and American communication styles and my own experience as a Japanese language instructor in the United States. I conducted classroom observations in two Japanese classes by two different teachers at a high school in Cabell County, WV. In addition to the classroom observations, I interviewed four Japanese teachers, including the two teachers I observed. Through observing Japanese language classrooms in specific contexts at a high school in the United States, I learned about American students' key communication styles and the teachers' positive and negative reactions to students' communication styles.

Design

This is a qualitative research study. According to Bogdan and Biklen (2003), there are five main characteristics of qualitative research:

1. Naturalistic: qualitative research has actual settings as the direct source of data and the researcher is the key instrument. (p. 4)
2. Descriptive Data: qualitative research is descriptive. The data collected take the form of words or pictures rather than numbers. (p. 5)
3. Concern with process: qualitative researchers are concerned with process rather than simply with outcomes or products. (p.6)
4. Inductive: qualitative researchers tend to analyze their data inductively. (p. 6)

5. Meaning: "Meaning" is of essential concern to the qualitative approach. (p. 7)

These five characteristics were the guidelines for concrete action during this study, which was naturalistic because I observed Japanese classes where the events I was interested in naturally occur. I also gathered data where people were engaging in natural behavior.

The data were descriptive, including interview transcripts, fieldnotes, and memos about informal, everyday conversations with the Japanese teachers. As this study was conducted inductively, I did not search out these data to prove or disprove hypotheses I held before entering this study. I intended to use this study to learn important information or to answer questions NJTs and I need to consider.

I have been concerned with the process and meaning of communication styles the Japanese teachers and their American students manifested in their daily interactions. Throughout this study, I kept asking myself questions such as "How do the Japanese teachers negotiate meaning and make sense of their American students' communication styles?" and "What assumptions do the teachers make about their lives as Japanese in the United States?"

One of the most important things that I learned from Patton (1990) is that reflexivity is of essential concern to the qualitative approach and that it is important for researchers to objectively study the subjective states of themselves and their subjects. Qualitative researchers should reflexively try to seek out their own subjective states and their effect on data.

Bogdan and Biklen (2003) also discuss reflexivity and meaning in the qualitative approach. They say researchers who use a qualitative approach are interested in how different people make sense of their lives. They are concerned with participant perspectives and focus on such questions as

"What assumptions do people make about their lives?" "What do they take for granted?"

I realized that the discussions were exactly what I have been thinking about Japan and Japanese people since I came to the United States. The more I have become aware of people in the United States and its culture, the more I have become aware of myself as a Japanese and my own culture. Having been a Japanese teacher and a student in the United States, I feel living in a different country helps us to be aware of both our own culture and the cultures of others. I believe that this reflexive experience in relation to my own life and culture is a significant strength for me as a qualitative researcher in this study.

There are three main points that I learned from Merriam (1994). First, "In the social sciences the whole notion of reliability in and of itself is problematic. That is, studying people and human behavior is not the same as studying inanimate matter. Human behavior is never static," (p. 55). Second, "Qualitative researchers are not seeking to establish 'laws' in which reliability of observation and measurement are essential. Rather, qualitative researchers seek to understand the world from the perspectives of those in it," (p. 56). Third, "most [qualitative researchers] prefer to think of generalizability as something different than going from a sample to a population." (p. 57).

What I learned from Merriam overlaps with what I learned from Bogdan and Biklen (2003). They also state that "some qualitative researchers do not think of generalizability in the conventional way. They are more interested in deriving universal statements of general social processes than statements of commonality between similar settings such as classrooms" (p. 32) and "They concern themselves not with the question of whether their

findings are generalizable, but rather with the question of to which other settings and subjects they are generalizable." (p. 32)

How I Selected the Research Field

Bogdan and Biklen (2003) made suggestions for selecting a focus of study:

1. Be practical. Pick something of reasonable size and complexity, that you have easy access to and that is close by.
2. Study something with which you are not directly involved.
3. Be open and flexible.
4. Study something that is interesting to you.
5. Study something that you think might be important. (p. 54)

For classroom observations, I selected two Japanese teachers' classes at Huntington High Schools because the research field meets all the five conditions above for me. I have easy access to the school. In fact, it only takes 15 minutes to get there. I usually have enough time for classroom observations in the morning and the Japanese teachers have their classes in the morning every day. I am not directly involved in the school. However, I understand I have to be careful of my own biases and pre-conceptions because I used to teach in the school and am familiar with some typical experiences Japanese teachers have in their classrooms. I have discussed earlier motivation, interest, and importance of this study that explains how and why this study meets the conditions one through three above.

Research Setting and Participants

The Japanese teachers are native speakers of Japanese. They had been trained and certified at a university in Osaka, Japan, before they came to the United States.

One of them *Ms. Kitao has six students in her class. One of them is an exchange student from Japan. She is taking the Japanese class because she is interested in teaching Japanese in the future. Five of them are boys who took her Japanese 1 (for beginners) class last year. They are currently taking her Japanese 2 from this Fall 2003 to Spring 2004, (From the end of August, 2003 to the beginning of June, 2004) so it is the second year of learning Japanese for them. It is also the second year of teaching Japanese at the high school for Ms. Kitao.

The other teacher Ms. Sano has 13 students (6 are girls and 7 are boys). They all are taking her Japanese 1 this year, so it is the first year for them to learn Japanese. I selected the teachers and students so that I can collect data from both the first year students and teacher and the second year students and teacher. I was expecting to find some interesting differences in the teachers' interpretation of their students' communication styles.

*The names of participants have been changed to protect their privacy.

Ethics

I adhered to the following basic guidelines based on Bogdan and Biklen's (2003) suggestions to protect the rights of the subjects.

- "Unless otherwise agreed to, the subjects' identities will be protected so that the information [I] collect will not embarrass or in other ways harm them."

- "[I] will treat subjects with respect and seek their cooperation in the research."
- "In negotiating permission to do a study, [I] will make it clear to those with whom I negotiate what the terms of the agreement are, and I will abide by that contract."
- "[I] will tell the truth when I write up and report my findings." (p. 45)

I collected consent forms from all the students and their parents/guardians. The forms permitted me to observe the classes and promised I would protect the rights of the students based on the guidelines I mentioned above.

Relationship with Subjects

As Patton (1990) discusses, "empathic neutrality" is the phrase that articulates the relationship I intended to have with the subjects. I learned "empathy describes a stance toward the people one meets while it connotes understanding, interest, and caring. Neutrality implies a stance toward their thoughts, emotions, and behaviors while it connotes being nondirective or nonjudgmental." To maintain this "empathic neutrality," Bogdan and Biklen (2003) advise us to choose a location in which we are not directly involved, so we can remain in a middle ground between too involved, which can cloud judgment, and remaining too distant, which can reduce understanding.

Spradley (1979) says, "skilled ethnographers often gather most of their data through participant observation and many casual, friendly conversations" (p. 58). Bogdan and Biklen agree: "In participant observation studies, the researcher usually knows the subjects through interacting with them before interviewing so the interview is often like a conversation between friends" (p. 94). They also say that it is the reason the interview cannot easily be separated from other research activities.

Procedures for Interviews

I interviewed twice with all four Japanese teachers during the same period of my classroom observations (from the beginning of September 2003 to the second week of December 2003). Each interview took thirty to fifty minutes and they were tape-recorded. The interviews were individual as I interviewed with each of the teachers separately. I interviewed with the Japanese teachers in Japanese and they answered to my questions in Japanese. Later, I transcribed the interviews into English. The interviews ware semi-structured, so I asked the Japanese teachers a few general questions in relation to the main interest of this study such as "Please tell me your positive or negative experiences in your Japanese classes." or "Please tell what you think about the differences in communication styles between American high students and Japanese students."

As I conducted the interviews, I followed Spradley's (1979) suggestions. He suggests that the three important ethnographic elements are its explicit purpose, ethnographic explanations, and ethnographic questions. As for the explicit purpose and ethnographic explanations, the ethnographer must make the purpose of his or her interview clear, and it is important to give a recording explanation. Bogdan and Biklen (2003) agree with this in thinking that researchers should inform the subject of their purpose early in the interview and also "make assurances (if they are necessary) that what is said in the interview will be treated confidentially" (p. 94).

Spradley (1979) also emphasizes the importance of expressing interest and ignorance often. He states the two elements become very important and most informants lack assurance that they know enough, that the ethnographer is really interested, especially at first. According to Bogdan and Biklen (2003), good interviewers are those who can communicate personal

interest and attention to subjects by being attentive, nodding their heads, and using appropriate facial expressions to communicate.

Procedures for Observations

Each of the two Japanese teachers I observed had two classes every day (Monday through Friday) from 8:46 a.m. to 10:32 a.m. I observed Ms. Kitao's class first (from 8:46 a.m. to 9:36 a.m.) and then Ms. Sano's class (from 9:42 a.m. to 10:32 a.m.) every Tuesday and Thursday (from the beginning of September 2003 to the second week of December 2003). Bogdan and Biklen (1998, p.107, 108) say that fieldnotes are "the written account of what the researcher hears, sees, experiences, and thinks in the course of collecting and reflecting on the data in a qualitative study." They also state that fieldnotes consist of both description and reflection. According to Bogdan and Biklen (1998, p.121), descriptive fieldnotes are the researcher's best effort to objectively write the details of what has occurred in the field. The reflective fieldnotes focus on the observer's perspective with an "emphasis on speculation, feeling, problems, ideas, hunches, impressions, and prejudices" (p. 114).

After understanding the purpose and content of fieldnotes, I began writing fieldnotes after each of my participant observation sessions. I followed Bogdan and Biklen's (2003) suggested format when typing my notes. I included a heading on the first page of each set of my fieldnotes. I also separated descriptive notes and observer comments and all the data into many small paragraphs.

In writing up my fieldnotes, I used Bogdan and Biklen's (2003) helpful hints. After the participant observation sessions, I got right to the task of writing the fieldnotes. I found a quiet place away from distraction; I usually went back to my apartment right away and started to jot down what I

remembered. I also set aside an adequate amount of time to complete the notes, and to outline the major events that happened.

While writing up my fieldnotes, I mentally recalled what happened in the observation session chronologically and let the events and conversations flow from my mind to the computer screen. As Bogdan and Biklen (1998, p.90) say, "There are times when note-taking in the setting is quite appropriate. These are times when the people in the setting are taking notes themselves." Usually, I could make many notes during the observation session because the subjects often engaged themselves in reading or writing activities. This helped me manage to write the fieldnotes in English. I kept in mind Bogdan and Biklen's recommendation to refrain from writing notes in front of the subjects.

Following Bogdan and Biklen's (2003) guidelines, I planned further data-collection sessions in light of what I found in previous observations. I also regularly reviewed my fieldnotes and identified specific leads to pursue in my next data-collection session. I wrote many "observer's comments" about ideas I generated. If I thought I had a breakthrough in understanding something that was previously obscure to me, I recorded and elaborated on it. If I noticed that certain subjects have things in common, I pointed it out in observer's comments.

After I had been in the classroom environment five or six times, I forced myself to read over my data and write a one or two page summary of what I thought was emerging. I developed links in my summary between observer's comments and continued this practice of memo writing or summarizing regularly. These memos provided a time to reflect on issues raised in the setting and how they related to larger theoretical, methodological, or substantive issues.

Procedures for Coding and Analyzing

According to Bogdan and Biklen's (2003) definition, data analysis is the process of systematically searching and arranging data you accumulate to increase your own understanding of them and to enable you to present what you have discovered to others. In this process, I needed to decide how to organize all of my data to organize a comprehensive and complete picture of my study.

I followed Bogdan and Biklen's (2003) systematic way to code and analyze data. First I arranged the data from the interviews and classroom observations in chronological order. Secondly, I read through the data, looking for repeated ideas, patterns of behavior, or subjects' ways of thinking. After rereading the data, I wrote code words in the margins of the data. Once code words had been written, the code words were listed and grouped into categories. Then, I went back through the data, implementing a method for identifying coding categories. At this point in the process, the code words and categories are examined and adjustments are made where necessary. Then, I finally sorted the data.

Preliminary Biases, Suppositions and Thoughts

My Previous Experiences

Bogdan and Biklen (2003) recommend owning up to potential biases before entering the field as a way to express and account for subjectivity. I felt the biggest bias I might bring to this study was my familiarity with American high school students who study Japanese. After I finished some participant observations, I stated my potential personal bias in the attachment in my fieldnotes,

> I thought I had to be very careful of my subjectivity toward what American high school students think or act, which may cloud researchers' judgement. I used to work in an American high school as a Japanese teacher for three years, so I may feel it difficult to distant myself from my common-sense understanding of what and how "typical" American high students are. (fieldnotes, 9/19/03)

Patton (1990) addresses an issue for the interpretation of personal bias. He states that, "Complete objectivity is impossible" (p. 40). He goes on to say that, "the researcher includes personal experience and empathic insight as part of the relevant data, while taking a neutral nonjudgmental stance toward whatever content may emerge" (p. 41). I learned people who are intimately involved in a setting find it difficult to distance themselves both from personal concerns and from their common-sense understanding of what is going on; and, besides, conducting a study with familiar people could be confusing and upsetting. I found Patton's statements to be quite enlightening, regarding the issue of bringing personal biases from previous experiences into a study and maintaining empathic neutrality. His words enabled me to acquire a deeper understanding of not only my own qualitative research, but also the works of other qualitative researchers as well.

Hicks (2002) advises us not to have generalized and stereotypical ideas when we try to know what is going on. This made me think of Bogdan and Biklen's (2003) discussion about the phenomenological approach. Since phenomenologists do not assume they know what things mean to the people they are studying, they believe that multiple ways of interpreting experiences are available to each of us through interacting with others. Hicks also states that generalized and stereotypical ideas must be resisted in favor of the long haul, patient listening, imaginative sympathy, and particular attention to the

unpredicted. Our own theoretical views are powerful, but we always should keep in mind that these perspectives are also shaped by what we learn from our subjects as we are developing appropriate self-awareness.

In order to avoid potential biases and remain open, I had a debriefing session with my advisor once every two weeks.

Limitations

I limited the main purpose of this study to understanding how the Japanese teachers make sense of their American students' communication styles. I observed American students in a high school in the United States, but I always kept in mind I should not discuss America as a culture through standards of American high school students. Their culture is very diverse and I just studied one specific context of a Japanese classroom in the United States.

Also, it is important to recognize that there are individual variations in the ways that people understand their culture, the culture in the United States and Japan in this study. Though members of a culture share a large part of their culture, each person has a unique view of his or her culture.

CHAPTER IV

Results and Conclusions

High Context and Low Context Communication in Relation to the Japanese Concept *Sassi*

High and Low Context Communication

I would like you to recall one of the key oppositions in communication styles: Hall's (1987) high- and low-context communication and the Japanese concept *sasshi*, which I discussed earlier. Hall contends:

> Context refers to the fact that when people communicate they take for granted how much the listener knows about the subject under discussion. In low-context communication, the listener knows very little and so must be told practically everything. In high-context communication, the listener is already "contexted," and so does not need to be told very much. For example, twins who have shared a long life in proximity to one another work at a much higher level on the context scale than people of different cultures who have only just met. (p.158)

As a foreign language teacher, I know context strongly influences our communication. No communication is totally independent of context, and all meaning has an important contextual component. Japanese speakers often appear ambiguous to non-native speakers because the meaning of Japanese sentences must be determined within the situational context in which the sentences are uttered or written. Japanese people generally appreciate the

ability to guess what someone means from the situational context and understand what is unsaid in the indirect forms of communication. As I have discussed in the literature review chapter, the ability is called *sasshi*.

Taking S*asshi* Guessing Ability for Granted

As a Japanese teacher in the United States, I learned that it was usually not a social norm among the American high school students I observed to have *sasshi* ability. Nevertheless, Japanese teachers tended to expect them to use *sasshi* ability in class. This could have been one of the reasons the teachers often had some difficulties communicating well with their students. In my interviews with the teachers, three of the four teachers showed their frustration about how their students are incapable of using their *sasshi* ability in class:

> Ms. Sano: I can't understand why some of [the American students] come late to class, put their bags on the desk, and just fart around . . . Japanese students at least come to realize that they need a pen or a worksheet when others are writing something in class, but some students here just don't do anything . . . they don't even ask me to borrow a pen or give them a new copy of the worksheet [when they have lost it] until I come close to them. What surprised me the most was that they said to me, "You didn't say we should bring them yesterday!" when I tried to call them to account for their manners.

In spite of the direct suggestion from one of her students, she went on to say:

> I have come to the conclusion that I should always give them hints about what they should do or say in Japan as much as possible. I am

> a Japanese teacher from Japan, so I should have them learn about Japan and Japanese culture from me. I should always be a role model of how they should behave and say things in Japan.

It was interesting to hear that her teaching style about Japanese communication styles itself was indirect and she expected her students to have *sasshi* ability so they could get the hints about what they should say and do. She doesn't directly tell them about Japanese communication styles. Another teacher, Ms. Yanagida, expressed a similar feeling:

> Maybe the difference between English and Japanese speakers is the reason that sometimes students sound inappropriate to me. I often wonder if they respect me as a teacher. I know I shouldn't be too understanding about that thinking because their culture is different. If they want to learn Japanese language, they also need to learn our way of communication, too. I just try to do my best to have them learn from my face because it is not expressible in words. I have been always serious about this, but I am not sure if I have done this all right…

Again, it was very interesting for me to hear that she wants her American students to learn the cultural aspects of Japanese communication from her behavior or facial expressions, not from direct wording. I found Ms. Kitao, another teacher of Huntington High School also felt the same way about her students saying, "I want them to understand what they should do without scolding them." So she, too, was expecting her students to understand her wishes without telling them specifically what she wanted.

Not Expecting *Sasshi* Ability

Ms. Chiba was the only one who actually said that Japanese teachers somehow should understand their American students' communication styles more positively and try to meet their needs.

> In class, I have felt that American high school students are likely to think that communication has to be done by words or it cannot work without words….I don't know if I can agree with all of it, but I can agree with most of it now as I have lived here quite a while. I have changed myself since I came here. Now I often try to say something to make it work or make it happen.

I gave her affirmative nods while listening to her. Nothing will happen until you say what you want, but many things could change if you actually say it. You shouldn't expect others to understand your expectations without words. This is one of the most important things I have learned since I came to the United States and I believe it certainly is critical in class, too.

Expecting S*asshi* to Fail

As I always drove to and from the high school with the Japanese teachers, on the way back home, I often could talk with them about what had happened in the class of that day. The following is an excerpt from my fieldnotes:

> When Ms. Kitao was writing a chart that shows the difference among Japanese pronouns, P-san, one of her students, suddenly said, "Do we need to write it down?" Ms. Kitao looked a little bit surprised and replied yes to the question.

On our way back home after the lesson of the day, I said to her, "You looked a little bit surprised when P-san asked you if he needed to write the

chart down." I found that she actually was a little bit upset about it and about the fact that her other students sometimes ask the same kinds of questions. She wanted him to know that he should write it down without her first saying that it was important to do so. She emphasized it was obviously important and good for them to take notes because they did the conversation practices about the pronouns in class and summarized them on the white board. She went on to say:

> I want them to know it is obvious that what I write on the whiteboard is more or less important. Of course, if they feel they already know what I write and they can use it correctly in real conversations, it is totally fine for me not to write. In either case, they don't have to ask me if they should write it down. It is all up to them.

I understood it was obvious for her as a Japanese, but I wondered if it was obvious in an American context. In Japanese schools, teachers almost always write what they want their students to learn on the board and students write them down without questioning. Teachers usually don't say, "write this down" directly to their students. There are few chances for students to discuss or question what their teachers write. The student of Ms. Kitao, P-san, might have just wanted to know if their textbook, which he could look at at any time, had the same information as the chart of Japanese pronouns she was writing on the whiteboard. Ms. Kitao could have clarified the purpose of his question before she came to the conclusion that he didn't even know what is important.

A Question of High-Context Communication

Here is another excerpt from my fieldnotes that shows how these Japanese teachers didn't seem to be aware that their high-context expectations didn't work for their American students because their communication styles don't usually require *sasshi*.

> As a student B-san was coming into the classroom saying, "I am sleepy," he came to the side of the classroom and lined up the desks in one row sideways so that he could lie himself down on it. He brought a green blanket from somewhere (I found out later that it was the homeroom teacher's blanket which is usually put on the back of her chair.) and used it as a pillow. He said, "Sensei (*teacher*) . . . I wanna sleep . . ." drowsily. Ms. Kitao said to him gently, "Dame-desu, (*no good*) B-san," to wake him up but he didn't even try to pick himself up. She called his name in a voice and said, "B-san! Wake up!" but he consistently refused to listen to her or to change his attitude saying, "Just 10 minutes." Ms. Kitao said, "Dame-desu, B-san," again. Then he finally sat up abruptly, put the blanket in its place, and went back to his seat.

I was just watching all these exchanges because I felt it was her job to discipline her student. Ms. Kitao might have been embarrassed because she couldn't even bring B-san to account for such an attitude toward her that would not usually happen in a Japanese school. After B-san went back to his seat and she looked relieved. Suddenly, B-san asked her:

> "Have you ever argued with anybody, Sensei? Like, I always argue with my mom"

She replied, “I don’t usually do it,” in Japanese and he still looked unconvinced. However, she didn’t try to go on to comment about the question. Ms. Kitao could have told B-san to stop refusing to listen to his teacher and go to his seat immediately, or the attitude will greatly affect his grade.

Another example was seen in Ms. Sano’s class. In an interview with her, she told me that how she tried in vain to make one of their students (R-san) to sit back and reflect her misbehavior without direct wording.

> Ms. S: When I found R-san was cheating in the exam, I softly tapped on her desk twice. She was trying to hide the cheat sheet under the answer sheet, but it was obvious for me that she was doing it. I tapped on her desk again without saying anything because I didn’t want to embarrass her in front of her classmates. I wanted her to admit her misbehavior, sit back and reflect it by herself. She can do it because she is a high school student. However, she kept making herself strange and perversely refused to admit to her misbehavior. It really shocked me.

Ms. Sano went to R-san’s counselor’s office and asked her what she should have done to R-san in the situation. The counselor explained how American teachers deal with the misbehavior. They would take the cheat sheet, write a white paper, and bring it to a principal’s office with the cheat sheet. Then, the principal will decide the penalty for the misbehavior. The principal will take specific measures such as calling her parents, giving her zero points on the test, or suspending her. The counselor emphasized that Ms. Sano should clearly bring her students to account for their misbehavior in class. Otherwise, students might take advantage of her ambiguous attitude.

There were many more situations in which the Japanese teachers could have clarified what they wanted their students to do in order to make their communication more successful.

Suggestions for Novice Japanese Teachers

What is important to realize is that too much information frequently leads people to feel they are being talked down to and too little information can mystify them or make them feel left out. Usually, people make these adjustments automatically in their own country, but in other countries, their messages frequently miss the target. American students seemed to have difficulty knowing what the Japanese teachers were "getting at." Japanese teachers I observed tended to expect high-context communication from their students. To improve their classroom management, it would be helpful for native Japanese teachers to unlearn their high-context communication styles and adapt to their American students' low-context communication styles.

Power Distance and Japanese Teachers' Cultural Shock

It was pointed out in the literature review about power distance that the major factors on which vertical relations in Japan are formed include age, position, experience, and knowledge. The vertical relations greatly influence Japanese people's behavior in role relationships, particularly those involving different degrees of power or authority. Because students in Japan don't usually question their teachers' orders nor do they refuse to listen to their teachers, there are few situations when teachers need to argue with their students. This could have been another reason why the Japanese teachers were so shocked that they couldn't bring their students account for their misbehavior.

Individualism and Collectivism

I will now proceed to the discussion of individualism and collectivism in relation to the Japanese concept *enryo*. The United States is an individualistic culture in which low-context messages tend to predominate, whereas Japan is a collectivistic culture in which high-context messages tend to predominate. When a person's goal is to assert him or herself as a unique person (individualism), he or she must be direct so that others will know where he or she stands. If, on the other hand, a person's goal is to maintain harmony in the in-group (collectivism), he or she cannot be direct because he or she might offend someone. To maintain harmony, collectivists need to be cautious and indirect.

Individualism and Collectivism in Relation to the Japanese Concept *Enryo*

Japanese Teachers' Common Perception

It was pointed out in the literature review section that *enryo* is suppression of individuality under the pressure of group solidarity and conformity. Because of this pressure, Japanese people often refrain from expressing opinions that go against the majority. They also restrain expressing desires, wishes, or preferences.

The Japanese teachers I interviewed shared a common perception that American students participate much more actively without *enryo* in their foreign language classroom activities than Japanese students do.

Japanese Teachers' Positive and Negative Feelings

In my interviews with the four novice teachers, I learned that all of them had felt positive about their American students' active participation without *enryo* in their Japanese classroom activities. Three of them Ms. Chiba, Ms. Kitao, and Miss Yanagida compared it with Japanese students'

attitude in English classes in Japan. They expressed their negative feelings about how *enryo* interferes with Japanese students' participation in English classes:

> Ms. Chiba: Students here (in America) appear very positive about speaking their mind to me. When they don't understand something, they say they don't. . . . They actively express their opinions even when I don't ask them to do. They do that before I ask . . . But Japanese students cannot be that way. They usually never speak up until I call on them. They often look away from me . . . and sometimes they don't speak up even when I ask them to do so.

Similarly, Ms. Kitao told me that how different in their attitude toward classroom activities in foreign language classes American students and Japanese students were.

> Ms. Kitao: They (American students) are not shy about speaking Japanese in a group. I love their attitude. I remember, when I was in a high school, most of my classmates [in English conversation classes] were speaking Japanese when they were supposed to practice English conversation as a pair or a group. And a few years later, I was very surprised again to see that many of my classmates in an English conversation class in my university did the same thing. My university was a university of foreign studies! My [American] students have impressed me because they always want to and try to use new Japanese words and phrases right after they learn them in class.

As a Japanese teacher who experienced English education in Japan, I have felt the same way as Ms. Chiba and Kitao did. In the same way, Ms.

Yanagida expressed her high opinion of the class atmosphere of classes in the United States.

> They (American students) don't hesitate to speak up in class. They say what they want to say even if it's contrary to what their classmates believe. They also don't hesitate to ask questions. They don't worry if their questions are good enough to ask or if they would be embarrassed when they ask questions. It is much easier for me to warm up the class because students actively create an atmosphere.

It is very important for Japanese teachers to create an atmosphere that helps students comfortably speak up and say what they want to say in class because they usually are self-conscious when speaking in a foreign language. It is actually one of the most challenging and important skills that is required for English teachers in Japan. Japanese students usually get used to repeating what teachers say, but they are not adept at creative activities. They would drop into silence if teachers do activities that require creativity such as free presentation or role-playing without intensive and careful preparation. Therefore, it is ideal that students themselves break the ice for activities in class. Japanese teachers in the United States can take advantage of American students' communication styles without *enryo.*

The interviews with the Japanese teachers reminded me of a hard time I had in my junior high school in Japan. I would like to reflect the experience in order to be more conscious of the origins of my perspective.

My Negative Feeling toward *Enryo* - the Nail That Sticks up Gets Hammered down

It happened in an English class when I was in my junior high school in Japan. There were about forty students and I was sitting in the back of the class. The teacher asked the class a tough question about a long idiomatic phrase. I was so excited that I knew the answer. I said it aloud although it is unusual that a student says something aloud in class before a teacher asks him/her to do because of *enryo*. I still vividly remember that twelve or fifteen students looked back at me at once the minute I answered the question.

It seemed to me that they punished me for breaking an important hidden rule among us. The teacher gave me words of praise, but I could not be happy nor get out of the feeling that I did something wrong. This experience made me never speak up in class in the junior high school. I learned to my cost that "the nail that sticks up gets hammered down" in Japan.

As this reflection shows, Japanese people's desire to maintain group spirit and harmony can interfere with Japanese students' aggressive participation in class, especially discussions and debates. Many of them may not want to express an opinion different from that of others. Japanese children raised traditionally are not used to valuing their own opinions. They are not trained from early childhood to make choices. They are trained to do just the opposite: find out what others think and want and adjust themselves to the group.

An important point to emphasize is that the Japanese teachers I interviewed and some of my Japanese friends have had the same kinds of experiences in Japan. In fact, it is often emphasized that Japanese secondary students returned from English speaking countries often have the similar kinds of bitter experiences. However, I would like to limit the discussion to

how Japanese teachers' negative feelings toward *enryo* contrast with their positive feelings toward their American students' communication styles without *enryo*.

When American Students Impress Japanese Teachers

The following are two of many situations that I observed in the Japanese classes that demonstrate the American students' active communication styles. I chose these two because both the Japanese teachers (Ms. Yanagida and Ms. Sano) and I agreed that we had been greatly impressed by the American students.

> Ms. Yanagida politely asked me to make extra copies of worksheets in her office because they were lacking. I was happy to help her of course. I took the original and left the class for her office. When I came back, one of her students N-san said to me, "Oh, you didn't say, '*Tadaima*' (meaning, "I am back" or "I am home" in Japanese)." I immediately recognized that the students had learned the phrase in the last class, so I said, "*Tadaima*" to them. They smiled and said, "*Okaeri*" (meaning, "Welcome back").

I observed that they were aggressive not only in speaking Japanese but also in writing it. Let me give you an example from Ms Sano's class.

> When I went into the classroom with Ms. S, we noticed that her students were laughing and writing something in Japanese on the whiteboard. We found out that some were trying to write what they did the night before in relation to Japanese subculture such as "I played Nintendo" or "I watched Dragon Ball Z." Others were trying to

> translate one of their favorite jokes into Japanese and write them down.

Similarly, most of Japanese high school students are very familiar with some of American subcultures. I had friends who were crazy about their favorite Hollywood movie stars or rock singers in my high school, but I had never seen them write the celebrities' names on a whiteboard. I believe this was also an attitude that was enforced under the pressure of *enryo*.

Enryo to preserve cultural identity

Through the classroom observations, I have also learned that American students are good at playing up others' positive attributes and recognizing them. When their classmate is good at speaking Japanese, they make a compliment about it. In contrast, Japanese who speak English "like a native" often are perceived negatively by other Japanese. Hildebrandt and Giles (1980) suggest that the need for a positive cultural identity plays an important role in why Japanese do not learn to speak English. They point out that

> the prevailing [collectivistic *enryo*] attitudes in Japan would tend to discourage confidence and encourage the feeling of 'shyness' professed by many Japanese in foreign language interactions. This lack of confidence would further enhance the need for differentiation from the outgroup [native English speakers] to increase a positive social identity (p.78)

Stated differently, if Japanese do not feel confident speaking English, then they need to differentiate themselves from English speakers (e.g., by not

speaking English) in order to have a positive cultural identity. On the other hand, in my classroom observations, I learned American students who speak Japanese well were not perceived negatively at all by other American students. Ability to speak Japanese didn't seem to have an influence on the American students' cultural identity. In other words, speaking Japanese well doesn't subtract from American students' cultural identity.

Challenges to teach *enryo* to American students

I have discussed how Japanese teachers' negative feelings toward *enryo* contrast with their positive feelings toward their American students' communication styles without *enryo*. However, in my interviews with the Japanese teachers, I learned they understood that they have to teach their students the importance of *enryo*, even knowing the negative side of it, so that their students can communicate well with Japanese people. The problem that I have found is that the Japanese teachers know how their American students should use *enryo*, but they have had difficulties in teaching them *enryo*. I must now return to the issue I discussed at the beginning of the literature review chapter (acquired versus learned culture) to help the Japanese teachers to overcome the problem.

Being Familiar with Acquired Culture in Students' Base Language

We have to remind ourselves of the fact that it is challenging to understand and teach others our acquired culture in our base language because we gain it unconsciously. Target native Japanese teachers should consciously study their acquired Japanese language and culture in order to effectively teach them to their base native American students. It is ideal that Japanese language programs have both target native teachers and base native teachers who are fluent in both languages, so students can have

opportunities to be exposed to both target native and base native perspectives on linguistic and cultural background of Japan. However, if there are only target native teachers in the programs, they should make every effort to do what base native teachers are supposed to do and act in both capacities.

Effective Japanese Teachers and American Students' Communication

My purpose in this section is to integrate the material presented in previous chapters and summarize suggestions I have advanced on how novice Japanese teachers can effectively communicate with their American students.

It is not reasonable for Japanese teachers to expect their American students to understand their culture and totally adapt to communication styles in Japan. For effective communication to happen, both groups have a responsibility to try to understand each other's culture. The material presented in previous chapters provides the foundation for Japanese teachers to make accurate predictions and explanations of their own and their students' behavior.

Summary of the Literature Review

There are several important cultural differences between Japan and the United States that Japanese teachers need to recognize in order to communicate effectively with their American students. These include, but are not limited to, the following two: Firstly, the United States is an individualistic culture where people don't always conceptualize themselves as interdependent with one another. There is not strong emphasis on *enryo* in interaction with others. Secondly, high-context messages are used more frequently in Japan than low-context messages. This leads to an emphasis on indirect forms of communication as opposed to the emphasis on direct forms of communication in the United States. *Sasshi* is necessary to understand

indirect messages. These summarize how the major dimensions of cultural variability influence American students' communication.

Summary of the Qualitative Data

The result of my study clearly indicates that the American students don't communicate with others under the pressure of *enryo* in their Japanese classes. Furthermore, the Japanese teachers usually approve of their American students' active communication styles without *enryo* in comparison with Japanese students' passive ones under the pressure of *enryo*.

The result also clearly shows that the base native Japanese teachers use high-context communication styles frequently in their Japanese classes. Besides, they unrealistically expect their students to use *sasshi* to understand the indirect communication styles. These results lead me to make the following three suggestions for novice Japanese teachers.

Suggestions for Novice Japanese Teachers

1. Depending on circumstances, novice Japanese teachers should unlearn their high-context expectations (*sasshi*) for their American students, so they can give them lower-context explanations, especially for classroom instructions, classroom expectations, and answers to students' questions.

2. Novice Japanese teachers should give their students clear explanations about what negative consequences would occur for their misbehavior. For example, they could explain how and why Japanese teachers seriously discredit students who refuse to listen to their teachers in reference to the Japanese vertical relations.

3. In relation to number two above, Japanese teachers should consult with their students' counselors and principals if necessary so that they can take concrete actions to discipline them for their misbehavior.

4. Novice Japanese teachers should learn about their acquired Japanese communication styles in English so that they can teach them in English

because it is not reasonable to expect beginning Japanese learners to understand lectures on Japanese communication styles in Japanese.

5. In relation to number four above, novice Japanese teachers could prepare handouts in English to help their students understand the Japanese communication styles. They could also prepare a list of references.

A further direction of this study will be to interview American students so that I can understand their perspectives. I understand there are always multiple ways of interpreting a context. Studying their perspectives about their Japanese teachers' and their own communication styles will add another important dimension to this study. It will help me to advance more practical suggestions for novice Japanese teachers.

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Curriculum Vitae

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LICENSES

- English Teacher's License in Japan (Secondary Education)
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SUMMARY

- Three-years of teaching experience at Huntington High School.
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- Official Certificates in both teaching English and Japanese as a Foreign Language.
- Exposure to American and East Asian cultures.
- Excellent communication skills in both English and Japanese.
- Excellent interpersonal and class management skills; having dealt with students' parents and professionals.
- Strong PC skills: Windows, Word, Excel, Power Point.

EXPERIENCE

2002-2003 **Marshall University, West Virginia**

Japanese Instructor, Modern Language Department

- Taught elementary, intermediate, and advanced Japanese to university students.
- Developed curriculum and lesson plans, selected textbooks, and designed learning aids and tests.
- Maintained a strong bond between Marshall University and Kansai University of Foreign Studies.
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1999-2002 **Huntington High School, West Virginia**

Japanese Instructor, Foreign Language Department

- Taught elementary, intermediate, and advanced Japanese to high school students.

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- Qualified to teach Dual Credit Japanese Program in alliance with Marshall University. (Students received the university credits and certificates from Japanese National Honor Society)

1999 **Bryn Mawr College, Pennsylvania**
Student Japanese Instructor
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EDUCATION

- **Education Specialist (Ed.S.) in Secondary Education (GPA 4.00) with the emphasis on Teaching Japanese as a Foreign Language**,
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